

Right2Vote Report

ISSUE 9: OCTOBER, 2019

Letter from the Editor:

Brothers and Sisters!

We're in the final quarter of 2019 and now is the time that nonprofits, law firms, activist groups and other criminal legal system involved organizations are setting their annual agendas for 2020. Now is the time to send letters and recommendations out to your advocates and supporters because everyone is in the season of setting new priorities for the upcoming year.

As for myself, the Right2Vote Campaign continues to be a primary focus for my national efforts. There are dozens of states who initiated legislation this past year that are in need of continued support and others who need guidance through the initiation stage. I in partnership with other voting rights restoration cohorts will service these states in their ongoing efforts.

In addition to coordinating the Right2Vote Campaign another one of my primary focuses is on repealing Truth-in-Sentencing (TIS) laws. I will begin in Michigan specifically, TIS laws set mandatory minimums that were incentivized by Joe Biden's 1994 Crime Bill. In response to this, I've sent out a new newsletter, #PassMIGoodTime to all of my comrades incarcerated in the state of Michigan. If you're in Michigan and did not receive one of those newsletters, or if you aren't in Michigan but would like to follow Michigan's Good Time Campaign please let me know and I would love to add you to this new mailing list.

The Good Time Campaign is focused on making sure that those incarcerated in Michigan have the opportunity to earn time off of their sentences like those in the majority of the United States. I know Michigan is not the only state where credit earning incentives are restricted. If you're living in a state, like Michigan, where you cannot earn time off of your sentence let me know when that restriction was created and if it was incentivized by the 94 Crime Bill. Also, if you're living in a state, like South Carolina, where Good Time credit earning was recently re-enacted, please let me know the details behind that law change and how your sentence was affected.

Prison doesn't make sense, not as a institution for effective punishment, corrections or rehabilitation. But prison makes even less sense without positive incentives like Good Time credits. I'm a firm believer in the fact that there is no real truth in sentencing, a lot of people were duped by the language but we must be careful with how we describe these laws. Truth-in-Sentencing is a big fat lie, that we as abolitionists must work together to expose and untie until the last thread is completely broken.

In Solidarity,
Amani Sawari
@Sawarimi

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Round 3 Presidential Debate to Resolve Our "Savagely Broken" Criminal Justice System.....	2
America's original sin and its vestiges belong to its states - including N.J.....	4
New Jersey State BAR Association Support Letter.....	4
In Whose Interest is the Death Penalty to be Exercised.....	5
#ShutDownCOPrisonBVCC, Architects of Manipulation- Formula for Oppression.....	6
Submission Info.....	7

These are the NATIONAL DEMANDS of the men and women in federal, immigration and state prisons:

- 1.Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.
- 2.An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.
- 3.Rescission of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.
- 4.Rescission of the Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to death by incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.
- 5.An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.
- 6.An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and Brown humans.
- 7.No denial of access to rehabilitation programs for imprisoned humans at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.
- 8.State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.
- 9.Reinstatement of Pell grant eligibility to prisoners in all US states and territories.
- 10.Recognition of voting rights for all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees and so-called "ex-felons." Their votes must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!

RECENT STATE ACTION

INTRODUCED | VOTED | PASSED

>New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ) released newest report:

Value to the Soul, People with Criminal Convictions on the Power of the Vote

>The New Jersey state BAR Association releases letter in favor of passing New Jersey's S 2100 to restore parolees, probationers and prisoners voting rights (see p.4)

MOVEMENT MOVES

PEOPLE | POSITIONS | POWER

Round 3 Presidential Debate to Resolve Our “Savagely Broken” Criminal Justice System

by Amani Sawari September 20, 2019 | www.sawarimi.org



The third round of the presidential debates were hosted by ABC News and Univision (with Spanish translation) at Texas Southern University, an HBCU in the deep south. This was the first of the debates that all of the qualified candidates fit onto one stage and that would be held on one night. The qualifications that candidates had to meet in order to participate were amassing 130,000 individual donors and receiving 2 percent support in at least four qualifying polls. The candidates that made the cut were former Vice President Joe Biden, Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey, Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend (IN), former housing secretary Julián Castro, Senator Kamala Harris of California, Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, former Representative Beto O'Rourke of Texas, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and tech entrepreneur Andrew Yang (NY). I was sad to see so many diverse voices like Marianne Williamson and Tulsi Gabbard go, but I was happy to save an extra night.

Addressing the Racial Divide

The first question that was asked of candidates was in honor of the audience, Black millennials attending the HBCU that wanted to hear candidates speak directly to their concerns, How would candidates address our nation's racial divide? The question was asked as if racism wasn't an ingrained ingredient of the American pie, but O'Rourke's response was surprisingly perfect. "Racism in this country is foundational...I'm going to follow Sheila Jackson Lee's lead and sign into law a reparations bill that will allow us to address this at its foundation". Sheila Jackson Lee is a U.S. Representative for Texas's 18th congressional district that has been serving in Congress since 1995 advocating for Black Americans' reparations, but I didn't expect O'Rourke to be a leading advocate for reparations on the debate stage. He confidently took that opportunity and filled the void that Marianne Williamson,

a presidential candidate who was included in the first two debates, left, but O'Rourke was not alone in providing solutions to mend the unique pains suffered by African Americans. Along with this, Buttigieg emphasized a need for a systemic approach to dismantling systemic racism saying, "It's not enough to take a racist policy and replace it with a neutral one and expect things to just get better on their own, harms compound." he went on to add that, "We know that the generational theft of the descendants of slaves is part of why everything from housing to education to health to employment, basically puts us in two different countries". Many politicians, lawmakers and elected officials have been focused on identifying racist laws to repeal, but after decades of racist policies being in place, a simple repeal or replacement with neutral policies would never address the harms that have compounded over generations. In response to this nationwide dilemma, Buttigieg has introduced the Douglass Plan: A Comprehensive Investment in the Empowerment of Black America, named after the honorable Frederick Douglass in order to deal with the plethora of harms suffered by our community including the over incarceration of Black Americans, healthcare inequities, deficient school systems and environmental injustice. Buttigieg's plan aims to invest in HBCUs, primary schools in communities of color and minority entrepreneurs among other transformative changes. Knowing that the destructive politics aimed at African Americans were intentional and strategic, the solutions for mitigating such practices must be as well.

Building New Systems, or Simply Adjusting Old Ones

The systems that we've developed in this country have obviously worked to the detriment of African Americans since America's founding. We have become casualties of America's war against the world to maintain economic power. We've suffered at the hands of our own 'protectors', continually murdered by police and corrections officers under a banner of 'safety and security' that fails to cover all citizens equally. In response to the hundreds of police murders of innocent Black civilians, Julian Castro was the first candidate to introduce a police reform plan. He noted this while giving name to some of the many who've lost their lives to police force including Tamar Rice, Laquan McDonald, Eric Garner and Sandra Bland.

While this type of reform plan is critical for as long as we have a police force flooding our streets, these types of policy changes aren't going to give us the transformation that we're desperate for. I admired Booker's courage in calling out a need for the government to address systemic racism stating, "We have a criminal justice system that is so racially biased that we have more African Americans under criminal supervision today than all slaves in 1850". He urged officials to not only call out that systematic racism exists, but to also have a systematic plan to do something about it. Buttigieg and Booker are the only candidates with such a plan. Booker's plan proposes establishing a new office in the White House to address hate crimes and systemic racism in the areas of criminal justice reform, healthcare & environmental justice.

Any candidate unwilling to compete with such proposals should not get the Black vote. Some candidates have been steering away from taking clear stances on such issues, perhaps thinking that the Black vote was already guaranteed. We must prove that our vote isn't dependent on one's skin color or charisma, so I couldn't help but applaud when Senator Harris was asked directly, "When you had the power, why didn't you try to effect change then?" To this she responded with a list of her pioneering efforts in criminal justice reform including requiring that officers wear body cameras full time, getting non-violent drug offenders in job placement programs and requiring racial bias trainings for police officers. None of these reforms were radical, but they did have an impact. She noted that the pillars of her proposal emphasize ending mass incarceration, decriminalizing marijuana, ending for-profit prisons, holding officers accountable, de-carcerating women & children and ending solitary confinement. All of these stances are shared by many of the other candidates with which she shared the stage.

Avoiding Exclusive Remedies to the War on Drugs

While there is a unified understanding that the War on Drugs was actually a war on African Americans that put far too many people behind bars, there is no consensus on how or when we will get those masses of incarcerated victims of this war from behind bars. I was surprised that Biden was called upon to propose solutions. With no one calling him out for his role in inflating this war, I'm starting to believe that candidates were coached not to bring up his efforts spearheading the 94 Crime Bill that is responsible for the policies that aided in the era of mass incarceration. Rather than calling Biden out on his role in creating the problem he was given center stage to speak on how to resolve the issue. He stated that he's proposed a plan to release non-violent drug offenders from prison. This is a plan that Booker has called, not aggressive enough. Biden responded saying, "Nobody should be in jail for a non-violent crime... Nobody should be in jail for a drug problem. We should be building more rehabilitation centers, not prisons". Hearing his words almost made me choke, while they're true I would have never expected them to come from him.

Rather than anyone seeing Biden as some transformed savior, we should view his seemingly radical change in views as a success of the incredible work prisoners have been doing to change the narrative surrounding punitive punishment and over-sentencing. Biden went on to add that "We have to change the whole way that we look at this. When we put people in prison, we have to equip them to get out... when you finish your return from prison, you should not only be able to vote, you should have access to pell grants, access to get housing". For decades incarcerated activists have been fighting for access to pell grants, restored voting rights and the protection of the basic human rights. Now that those conservatives who've worked so hard to impede those rights have changed their tune it's time that we hold them accountable. We cannot forget the role that politicians like Biden

played that decimated millions of lives, but we should take advantage of his voice making a positive contribution to the conversation against punitive punishment and over-sentencing.

Like Biden, Klobuchar is another conservative, formerly a prosecutor for 8 years, whose changed her views on sentencing and reform. Klobuchar was said by the ACLU of Minnesota to have no interest in racial justice. She refuted this statement, emphasizing that as president there will be a Second Step to follow the First Step Act on Sentencing and Criminal Justice Reform. The First Step Act led to thousands of releases of prisoners from federal prisons, but she noted that sentences should be reduced for the 90% of individuals sentenced in state and local jails. However, she raised her finger to clarify that sentencing should be reduced for non-violent offenders specifically, saying, "Let's reduce those sentences for nonviolent offenders, let's get the jobs and let them vote when they get out of prison". We cannot allow officials to create a divide between violent and nonviolent prison populations. It's essential that we push back against such rhetoric demanding just and equal reforms for violent and nonviolent offenders alike. All those in prison are capable of change, should have access to rehabilitation programs and equal access to resources that would contribute to their growth and development as citizens of our democracy regardless of the type of their offense.

Final Thoughts

While Booker has had me on an emotional roller coaster throughout this race, I was proud of his responses throughout the night, he is certainly my round 3 winner. While it's not an official endorsement, I applaud his pushing candidates to commit to using their power of clemency to restore the lives of tens of thousands of over-sentenced incarcerated citizens. He was bold and aggressive saying "Our criminal justice system is so savagely broken... so much of this comes down to privilege" and he went on to challenge candidates, "If 87 members of the US senate has come together and said that these sentences are way too long and we changed it, but we didn't make it retroactive, we could literally point to the people who are in jail unjustly right now. Everyone on this stage should say that we are going to give clemency to these 17,000 people, every day that we wait is too long".

Booker's numbers of those who are unjustly incarcerated reflect that of those who were released under the First Step Act that did not effect those serving time in state and local facilities. Presidents have the power to pardon these individuals, but this power is vastly underutilized and doing so would take a specific and targeted effort. While clemency is a powerful tool, it is not the only one a president has and there are no excuses as to why these candidates aren't all talking about ways to address the harms of historically racist politics, ending mass incarceration, and leveling the economic and political playing field for underserved classes. The world is watching and we refuse to settle.



America's original sin & its vestiges belong to its states - including N.J.

by Ronald P. Haygood August 18, 2019 | www.nj.com



The reparations conversation must occur at the state level, too, with each state confronting its historical role in American slavery, as well as the modern day vestiges that continue to harm descendants of enslaved Black people, Ryan P. Haygood says.

Four hundred years ago this month, Black people arrived in Jamestown, brought to America as captives. The issue of America's original sin and its lasting stain have led to a national conversation about reparations this anniversary year, with people asking who is responsible, for how long, and what to do about it. But the reparations conversation must occur at the state level, too, with each state confronting its historical role in American slavery, as well as the modern day vestiges that continue to harm descendants of enslaved Black people, while simultaneously conferring advantages to the descendants of that system's beneficiaries. In doing so, we must acknowledge the direct line from American slavery to today's system of voter suppression, racial wealth disparities, mass incarceration, and racial segregation. Perhaps, counter-intuitively, addressing these issues is in some ways more daunting in the North, where well-meaning people remark, "We aren't like those Southern states." But the history and present day impact of racism in our country are not exclusive to the American South. Take New Jersey. New Jersey was the first Northern states to restrict the vote to white men, the same year it prohibited people with convictions from voting. Today, New Jersey suffers from racialized voter disenfranchisement, denying the vote to over 100,000 people in prison, on parole or on probation, according to state data. Almost half are Black, though Black people comprise just 15 percent of the state's population. The racism of the criminal justice system is directly imported into the franchise.

Generations of Black kids have also experienced that racism. Just two years after the Civil War, New Jersey opened Jamesburg — its largest youth prison for boys. Today, Black children are 30 times more likely to be locked up than white children — the highest disparity rate in America, even though Black and white children commit most offenses at similar rates. Just eight white kids are incarcerated in New Jersey, compared to 113 Black kids, according to state data. You do not have to go to the Southern border to see kids torn from their families and caged; it happens at mind-blowing rates for Black kids compared to white kids right here in New Jersey. New Jersey also experienced racially restrictive covenants to prohibit Black people from buying, leasing, or occupying property based on race, and redlining, targeting Black people who were refused housing loans.

That legacy of housing discrimination spills into today's vast discrepancy in home ownership rates: 75.8% for white households and 37.8% for Black households. Because home ownership is a primary driver of wealth, Black and Latino people in New Jersey confront one of the worst racial wealth gaps in America. The median net worth for New Jersey's white families is \$309,000 — the highest in the nation. For New Jersey's Black and Latino families it is, incredibly, just \$5,900 and \$7,020, respectively, according to Prosperity Now Scorecard. New Jersey also leads the nation in home foreclosures, ATTOM data shows.

Finally, racial segregation itself, born from the vestiges of slavery, pervades the Garden State, which, while one of the most racially diverse states in America, is among the most segregated. New Jersey's racial diversity and racial segregation, combined with its extreme wealth and punishing poverty, has created in New Jersey's public classrooms some of the fiercest segregation by race, ethnicity, and income in this country. Nearly half of New Jersey's Black and Latino students attend schools that are more than 90 percent nonwhite. Almost two-thirds go to schools that are more than 75 percent nonwhite. It is a sobering fact that 400 years after Black people arrived in Jamestown, the legacy of slavery endures.

Addressing these systemic challenges in New Jersey and elsewhere, we must begin with the understanding that they were created by design, re-inforced, and perpetuated by a legal system of racial oppression — not individual failures. Thus, a system of liberation must, too, be created by design. This will require unapologetic and courageous leadership that is proximate to, and representative of, the Black communities impacted by this system of racial oppression. Though it is certainly part of the remedy, it also means broadening the conversation beyond cutting checks. A true system of liberation requires that we address racial injustice with a comprehensive, policy driven strategy that both repairs harms and opens opportunity unjustly denied for generations.

On the federal level, Rep. John Conyers' HR 40 would create a commission to study and develop reparations proposals. It should be moved. Likewise in New Jersey, our organization, the New Jersey State Conference NAACP, Salvation and Social Justice, and partners are working with leadership of the Legislative Black Caucus to create a Reparative Justice Task Force to urge New Jersey to take responsibility for its role in American slavery, including by making comprehensive and sweeping policy recommendations and other deep and reparative investments in Black communities impacted by New Jersey's system of racial discrimination. In doing so, New Jersey will join other states, such as Vermont, in taking steps toward reparation. Other states should follow suit. In testimony before Congress, Ta-Nehisi Coates said, "[T]he question really is not whether we'll be tied to the somethings of our past, but whether we are courageous enough to be tied to the whole of them." That past — and the obligation to repair it — belongs to all of America, including New Jersey. —



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

October 4, 2019

Via Electronic and Regular Mail

The Honorable L. Ronald Rice
1044 South Orange Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07106

The Honorable Shavonda E. Sumter
21-5 Mill Street
Paterson, New Jersey 07501

Re: S2100 (Rice)/A3456 (Sumter) — Removes prohibition on voting by persons convicted of indictable offense who are on parole, probation, or serving sentence

Dear Senator Rice and Assemblywoman Sumter:

On behalf of the New Jersey State Bar Association, I write to convey our support for S2100/A3456, giving prisoners, parolees and probationers the right to vote. This bill reverses a practice that has resulted in a disparate impact on people of color without any meaningful relationship to the deterrence or punitive purpose of our criminal laws.

The state's modern constitution, adopted in 1947, expanded the right to vote to "[e]very citizen of the United States" ages 18 and over with certain residency requirements. See 1947 State Constitution. It preserved, however, the right of the Legislature to restrict individuals convicted of certain crimes from voting and, for decades, the Legislature exercised that right to disenfranchise persons convicted of indictable offenses.

The current statistics as a result of that policy are staggering. Of the nearly 100,000 individuals who are precluded from voting as a result of criminal convictions, nearly 50 percent are African American and a large percentage are Latino. Transgender people of color are also significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system. These communities, perhaps the most vulnerable populations in New Jersey, therefore, are significantly underrepresented in their ability to have a voice in voting on the leaders and policy of this state. S2100/A3456 will change that.

More importantly, the legislation recognizes that denial of voting rights to convicted persons bears little relationship to either the punitive or rehabilitative purpose of the criminal laws. On the contrary, removing one's right to vote actually appears to hurt, not help, the rehabilitation process, as it causes a further disconnect between those with convictions and their communities. Without a strong rationale to do so, stripping an individual of the fundamental constitutional right to vote cannot be sustained.

One Constitution Square, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1520 | 732-249-5000 | F: 732-249-2815 | njbsa.com

We thank you for your sponsorship of this bill and remain willing to assist you in your efforts to move it forward. If you have any questions or would like to speak further on this or any other issue, please feel free to reach out to me at 732-214-8510 (office), 732-239-3356 (cell) or lchapland@njbsa.com. Thank you for your time and attention.

Very truly yours,

Lisa Chapland, Esq.
Director, Government Affairs

cc: Angela Scheck, Executive Director
Evelyn Padin, Esq., President

KONCENTRATION KAMP KHRONICLES

ANALYSIS | NARRATIVE | POETRY

In Whose Interest is the Death Penalty to be Exercised

by Lacino Hamilton | Marquette Branch Prison



The "Justice" department recently announced that U.S. Attorney General William Barr has instructed the Federal Bureau of Prisons to change the federal execution protocol to include capital punishment. For the first time in nearly two decades the federal government will carry out the death penalty. What does this say about the times we live in? It says in order to answer the critical question of in whose interest is the death penalty to be exercised, our times need a realistic appraisal of the death penalty's role in America.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons bringing the death penalty back is not an isolated phenomenon. It is one of several interlocked responses to protect the economic and political systems that are threatening and undermining democracy. A signal that the state will not hesitate to use extreme force to defend policies pursued over the past two years which seem deliberately designed to remove basic protections from the poorest, punish the most vulnerable, and make basic human rights a privilege to be earned rather than a right of humankind.

For over five decades the overall policy response to the immense wealth of the few and the squalor and deprivation in which vast numbers of Americans exist has been neglectful at best, but the dramatic change of direction in American economic and social policy since President Trump has come into office is worsening this situation and ensuring that America remains divided and unequal. Despite misleading rhetoric about a booming economy and low employment numbers, remarkably little attention has been given to the Trump administration's radical program of financial, environmental, health and safety deregulation that elimi-

nates protections mainly benefiting the middle classes and poor.

Bringing back Federal executions is shorthand, for those in the know, that gross disparities in opportunity, resources and wealth inevitably breed frustration and acts of rebellion by members of society who are intensely dissatisfied and feel powerless to change their position because they feel no commitment from the larger society. Shorthand that more and more social protections will likely disappear in the years ahead, which will fuel more social dissatisfaction. Shorthand for the tragic targeting of those most affected by policies that further tread crucial dimensions of the social safety net that is already full of holes.

I have found that it is not always true that moments like this automatically influence a useful dialogue. What we have to do is be able to create space where people are willing to look at things in new ways. Under the Trump administration solutions to major domestic social problems are seen to lie with voices demanding tougher laws and more punishment. Solutions are seen to lie in replicating "law and order" appeal, underscoring Trump's addition to a polarized past rather than a restorative present and a transformative future. We cannot hide from any of these hard truths. We have to name them and own them and change them.

In whose interest is the death penalty to be exercised? Those moving full-steam ahead to make America, which already leads the developed world in income and wealth inequality, even more unequal. It is in the interest of the top 1% of the American population that owns 39% of the total wealth. It is in the interest of those who seek to add 20 million persons to the ranks of those without health insurance. More generally, the Federal Bureau of Prisons bringing back the death penalty is in the interest of defenders of the status quo. It is ironic that those who fight the hardest for the "right to life" also fight hard for the death penalty.

In summary, every fascist regime understands the rebellious potential of those cast aside by society and the political expediency of threats, coercion and the use of force. This bodes ill not only for the poor and those clinging to the middle-class, but for society as a whole since experience shows that vulnerable populations are often a testing ground for policies and practices subsequently applied more broadly. The problem is deeper than the Federal Bureau of Prisons bringing the death penalty back, extreme inequality actually signifies the transfer of economic and political power to a handful of elites who inevitably use it to further their own self-interest, as demonstrated in various countries around the world. The death penalty is not just inhumane and a violation of human rights, but threatens and undermines democracy.

Mailing Info

Lacino Hamilton #247310
Marquette Branch Prison
1960 US Highway 41 South
Marquette, MI 49855

#ShutDownCOPrisonBVCC

Architects of Manipulation -

Formula for Oppression

by Keith Clayton Brooks | Buena Vista Correctional Complex

Months ago I wrote local news broadcasting stations, members of the associated press, elected State officials, and civil rights advocates about the Colorado department of Corrections (CDOC) response to a 30-on-30 brawl between Black and Hispanic inmates. This quiet storm preceded the hours long event at Lee correctional facility in South Carolina where several inmates were seriously injured or killed. It's safe to assume, that in ordinary circumstances, prison riots would top the list for reasons triggering a changing of the guards starting with the warden. As I continue to report, Buena Vista Correctional Complex (BVCC) is the poster child for penal authority clinging to the institution of slavery long abolished by the Supreme Court. Racism, bigotry, misogyny, bullying, repression, discrimination, and harassment is alive and well. Although it doesn't have the strength of federal and state power, it flourishes under the banner of safety and security.

Naysayers of this reality and human condition will lead the public to believe agents of the institution of slavery are characters that are rogue, glaringly fiendish, or derived from stories told about far away places. I will tell you that instances such as the retainment of the warden at BVCC is proof of careful collaboration between executive and judicial offices that maligns the protections against abuses of official power and impairs accountability mechanisms. The scales of Justice are imbalanced and the prism through which courts view prison officials abuses is clouded. Anything that might disrupt the synchronization will be undermined and flouted.

The occupation of prison guard, be it line staff, administrators, or management personnel, presents the nature of man considerable coverage for bullying, discrimination, harassment, racism, retaliation, sadism, bigotry, misogyny, and cultural prejudice. The field isn't limited to prisoners either. In my 15 years of straight confinement, I've seen it all. Blatant racism against my 80 year old grandmother without provocation, a stage plot to effectuate justifiable homicide against my life by a warden, administrative punishment for racial hatred in response to OJ Simpson's parole, and the proliferation of incentives for the affluent or rewards for the pleasure seekers and informants. I make no quarrel against a man who takes advantage of a golden ticket to the best quality of life available. The problem identified in address here is the direction the penal system takes when those wielding absolute power manipulate behavior under the auspicious of safety and security. The impact of these architects of manipulation grow in retaliation to their rise through the occupational hierarchy. This is a formula for oppression because promotions are essentially a means of ensuring agenda survive. Only those deemed worthy to contribute to the institution of slavery are passed the mantle.

Believe it or not ordinary citizens, while not able to expertly articulate this reality or professionally detail the existence of the institution of slavery across the entire spectrum of activities. Since this profession is maligned and needlessly flawed, they quit, are run off, or do not put forth the effort to single handedly change the customs. The imbalance of power even among those in power is daunting and impossible to overcome. These tenured officials demand that duties are performed according to this oppressive agenda. This manifests an inexhaustible list of malicious acts from planting adverse documentary reports in prisoners' files to sabotaging legitimate pursuits of remedies.

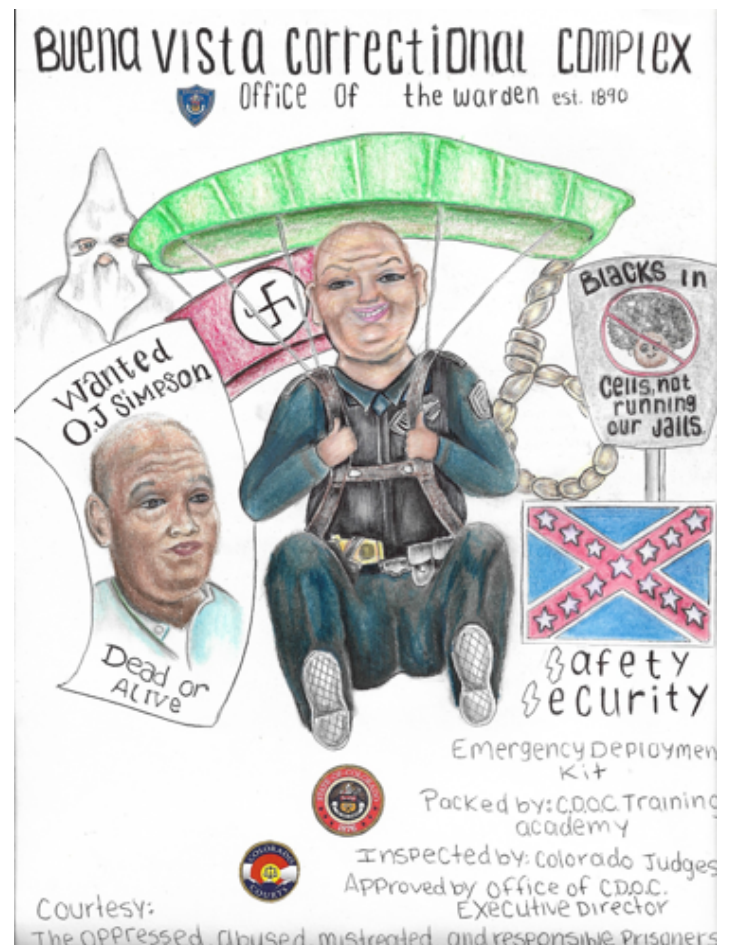
In fairness, I'll concede the overwhelming majority of these acts are minor, trivial, marginal, and lean more towards simple bullying, discrimination, harassment. This concession however, does not mean this dimension of human experience is benign as they are the breeding grounds for more egregious acts like telling my grandmother to cut her weave off if she wants to visit me again in front of visitors and prisoners antagonizes, demeans and provokes. A proving ground is created. This example isn't an instance of rouge staff veering into unacceptable behavior, rather this is symptomatic of the reality that we are in racist terri-

tory. Let me connect the dots. No ordinary citizen would make such an overt statement in view of others incidental to enforcing any rules so written. The institution of slavery I report exist is far removed from an incubation period and has grown mature, entrenched and battle-tested. Hiring, training, supervision practice is virtually guarantee the ordinary citizen is never in a position to act on a racial animus or review activity of racial discrimination thanks in large part to an indoctrination period.

The minor, trivial, and marginal acts of oppression an ordinary citizen would not be predisposed to carry out are not benign because it weeds out those who resist the institution of slavery treatment of others inherent in this philosophy. Consequently, when sent up the chain of command, those who have become indoctrinated, excuse the act of racism and eventually promote the officer and she's in a position to further the institution of slavery agenda.

Early on, this indoctrination impresses upon the mind that safety and security is the all-purpose, all-powerful self-serving exercise of authority to impose their personal will. This is reinforced by the approval of supervisor to require only the utterance of safety and security to clear staff for further scrutiny. Indeed, virtually every challenge to an exercise of authority will produce and non sequiturs, broad, general, and they responsible safety and security justifications. These blanket statements become second nature through the process of indoctrination and shields the first nature. Rule enforcement on the fly under the auspicious of discretion soon becomes rule-making.

The strong are strengthened. One staff's hassle rooted in cultural differences later is inherited by staff who regurgitate safety and security and this racially-motivated whim evolves into custom which then is indistinguishable from policy. These pet peeves inherited by staff who lack the scope and breadth of policy development spread department wide as they rise through the ranks. Only those susceptible to indoctrination are promoted. Besides the fact that those who adopt the values inherent in the institution of slavery are uniquely sociopathic, this strengthens the disadvantages of diversity. Diversity brings different views and exploration of methodologies.



The edifying effect in the proper application of the scope and purpose of safety and security is significantly diminished by the usage of a trump card or carte blanche license to act without scrutiny. This custom may be a source of the severe understaffing problem prevalent at BVCC and precipitates many staff assaults. Case in point, the sergeant who was rewarded for her treatment of my grandmother was knocked out by a prisoner. I do not condone the use of violence, but this woman no doubt paid the price for the conduct encouraged by the institution of slavery in this day and age. The profession itself suffers because it not only has a shortage, but it requires higher risk confrontations initiated by staff for benign human activity.

Everyone can agree that the institution of slavery, in the most favorable light, does not contemplate respect, dignity, or humanity. It's perfect cover is safety and security. I liken it to a parachute. Put an act of abuse, bullying, discrimination, harassment, or oppression on the spot by protest or grieving and outcomes the chute to insulate them from accountability. This is obvious to the ordinary citizen. With the chute, all sorts of subjective the particulars are detectable. The chute does not distinguish or conceal these active influencers. Only because the ordinary citizen doesn't share these traits and have no need for pretext it is apparent. This scheme is brilliant and I applaud the system in place for its cleverness in weeding out those that threaten to end this monopoly. Tenured prison authority and the hierarchy of judicial counterparts instituted a method of control and are architects in their profession. However, as history dictates, the scales will be balanced.

This formula for oppression is easily offset and counter balanced. I have not experienced such a widespread and far-reaching scheme as the one in place here. I'm sure the warden was retained for the strong ties he has with the local district courts. These chords do not all his abuse has to be weighed or flaws in practice to be scrutinized. Actions that are clearly capricious and arbitrary at other prisons are commonplace here. Video footage disappears, false and discrete documents are filed in State records, and legitimate activity challenging abuses are categorized as boisterous and hostile. I suggest shutting down BVCC and reassigning personnel to close the last fortification of the institution of slavery thriving in Colorado.

Alternatively, I propose a solution more emblematic of the spirit and values contained in our democracy. To qualify this proposal, I rely on literature I'm certain exists that will support the reality that only a miniscule portion of society is willing to set aside morals, principles, and system of beliefs to serve an institution of slavery. What we need from among the rank and company prison reform activists are regular citizens to fill the

This will replenish depleted workforce numbers and phase out those with an eye for bullying and possess a thirst for inflicting administrative punishment arbitrarily. This is how we affect prison reform and culture change. More job applicants, less centerstage posturing or sideline jeering. Replacing wardens, program managers, medical directors, housing supervisors, hearing officers, shift commanders, and case managers weakens the buffer that insulates them from accountability. There is a shortage already, so penal authority have created a compelling interest to ignore abuses, bypass misconduct areas, and evade accountability procedures because they need to keep the prisoners running. That's why they are able to garner sympathy from anyone who inquires. You didn't know?

I understand changing the culture at the forefront of the institution of slavery represents a formidable challenge, but this attitude was not vanquished when the ink dried on the instrument that abolished the practice. Recruitment is the only solution. In this initiative, we as a class of incarcerated citizens must do our part. We must meet new recruits halfway. Share with me your experiences and let's work together to become a united front against the institution of repression in control. Hit me up and I'll share with you details on how to help the recruited uproot the tenured. This is a call to action that must be passed through your social ties and amplified in the public consciousness. That's game to meditate on! Let's launch the next generation of corrections on our watch and move to do our part to change the nature of relationships indigenous to prison culture. —

Mailing Info

Keith Clayton Brooks
aka B. Boots



Colorado Department of
Corrections
CDOC #108827
Buena Vista Correctional
Complex (As of July 2019)
PO Box 2017
Buena Vista, CO 81211

SUBMISSION INFO

NARRATIVE | POETRY | THEORY

Call for Content

In addition to publishing content raising awareness about the Right2Vote Campaign and its initiatives, the Right2Vote Report accepts work from prisoners in the form of articles, art and poetry as well as the contribution of stamps. We also work with other nonprofits and organizers to amplify your voices. This publication and its campaign are about you and our most meaningful contributions come from the inside. For readers interested in submitting their work: typed and printed can be sent to the return address or emailed to: amanisawari@gmail.com. Please write your return address onto your submission

Right2Vote Campaign Artwork

The campaign is accepting artwork submissions for promoting and marketing the New Suffrage Movement. ALL artwork related to the restoring prisoners' voting rights will be used to promote the campaign. Please sign your artwork. Artwork will be featured on T-shirts, stickers, buttons, wristbands, tote bags and social media. We are also looking for an official logo to use for the campaign. We want the art ad graphic design to highlight prisoners so we look forward to receiving as many of submissions as possible.

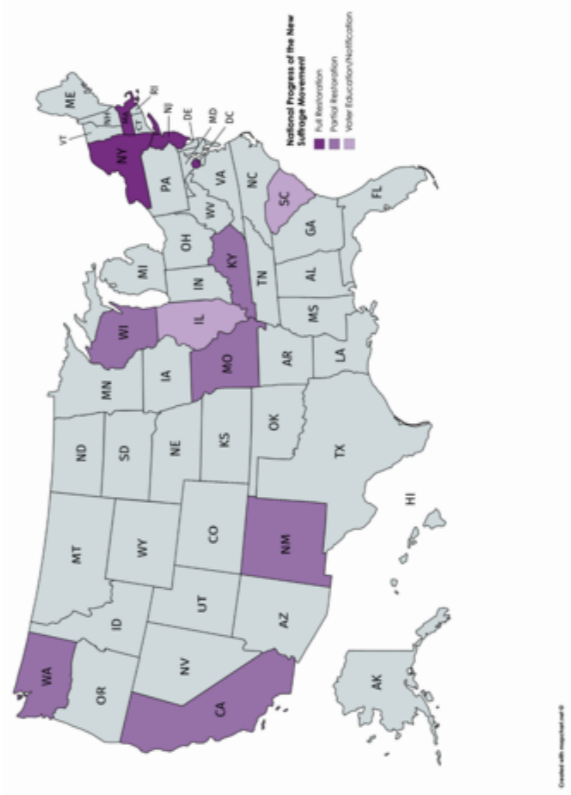
V.O.I.C.Ed Podcast

Beginning this month Amani Sawari will be launching a new podcast V.O.I.C.Ed, Voices Of Incarcerated Citizens Empowered, in order to uplift the voices of those on the inside and having conversations as it relates to criminal justice reform, prison abolition, the prison-industrial-slave-complex, new legislation and current events. If you are interested in being featured as a voice on this podcast please send a letter to the return address with topics that you would like to discuss as well as the process for registering a phone number on your contact list. Those who are interested in being featured will be sent the call line once they're approved as a guest. All conversations made on the VOICED call line are recorded to be edited for the podcast. Please do not abuse the call line.

Sawarimi does not provide legal services, but happily forwards requests for legal representation to partners at the National Lawyers' Guild. Sawarimi is a platform of expression and empowerment for disenfranchised and marginalized groups, especially members of the African diaspora. Amani Sawari is a writer, founder of Sawarimi and SawarimiMedia, spokesperson for Jailhouse Lawyers Speak and National Coordinator of their Right2Vote Campaign with the support of the Roddenberry Foundation. Download and print issues of the Right2Vote Report for distribution at <http://sawarimi.org/right2vote-report>

Sawari Media
PO Box #2278
Detroit, MI 48202

National Progress to Ending Felony Disenfranchisement



By Selinda Guerrero and artist Micah Bazant